



United States Department of Agriculture
Rural Development
Crawford Area Office

August 16th, 2005

Good Morning Secretary and other honored officials.

My name is Bob Schoenfeldt - I'm the Area Director of the USDA-Rural Development for NW PA, Meadville, Crawford County. My comments will relate to questions #5 and #6.

The President's Management Agenda and the USDA's Results Agenda serve as bricks and mortar for the USDA to build upon our Long and Successful history of accomplishments. These initiatives enable the USDA employees as professional public servants, to spend the taxpayers' money wisely and aid in our goal of improving the programs given to our Agencies.

The People's Department as Abraham Lincoln first called the USDA has always been driven to provide service to the American people - whether those people be farmers, consumers, rural citizens or those interested in nutrition, scientific research, natural resources and forests, renewable energy, technical assistance, food safety or the protection and security of our food system. We at the USDA achieve these results daily as we strive to provide the best government service possible.

It is important to note that the USDA has one of the broadest scopes and oversight of any Federal Agency. The USDA is more than just about Agriculture and includes the economic and community development or the "saving" of rural areas. We all know the out-migration that has occurred from the rural areas to the more urban/suburban areas in the last 10-20 years. We in the USDA need to make sure future generations have plenty of opportunities to raise their families in the rural areas. The USDA must insure a good quality of life in rural America.

As you know, Rural Development is the largest direct credit arm of the Federal Government. Only two national banks have larger portfolios than us. The USDA Rural Development in Pennsylvania over the last five (5) fiscal years has put into rural PA, close to \$1.3 billion dollars. And we have much more that we could do - we have many programs with demands that exceed our funding allocations. Rural Development oversees close to 50 different funding programs. It's an overwhelming responsibility.

Mr. Secretary, with your strong leadership, we need to build leadership opportunities in rural America. America needs strong and vibrant rural communities. We need neighbors caring for neighbors, a place where our future generations learn a good work ethic, where rural folks can develop a commitment to a purpose and a discipline. Then and only then will we have a vibrant rural America.

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Committed to the future of rural communities.

"USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender."

Rural Development (the only agency with programs that can build a town) can help, but we need our funding allocations for all programs increased, not decreased as we've seen the last few years. We can provide the infrastructure (water and sewer), the business and industry funding, rural broadband, educational systems, primary care facilities and critical care access hospitals, family homes, first responder funding for fire companies and emergency services, distance learning and telemedicine - all the necessary facilities for a rural quality family life. Our programs can take care of the needs for creating a strong rural community. The USDA - all agencies need an increase in funding to assist you in saving rural America. Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you and be a part of this forum.

Sincerely



Robert C. Schoenfeldt

Area Director

NW PA Rural Development Area Office

